

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
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O R 071515Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8816
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 7044

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, CG, NI, CU, UR
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN PERCEPTION OF US INVOLVEMENT IN SHABA

REF: (A) STATE 141264, (B) LAGOS 6853

BEGIN SUMMARY. DISCUSSION WITH MEA AFRICA DEPARTMENT
DEPUTY DIRECTOR VICTOR TAYLOR ON SHABA CONFIRMS ONGOING
SOUL-SEARCHING AND CONFUSION AMONG MEA SENIOR OFFICIALS
WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO FORMULATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.
IN GENERAL, THEY CONTINUE TO OPPOSE ANY WESTERN
INVOLVEMENT IN SHABA NAD BELIEVE, IF IT CONTINUES,
"RESPONSIBLE" AFRICAN COUNTRIES WILL BEGIN TO QUESTION
SINCERITY OF OTHER U.S. INITIATIVES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.
END SUMMARY

1. IN ABSENCE OF GARBA, DEDE AND FAFOWARA FROM LAGOS,
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POLCOUNS MET WITH MEA AFRICAN DEPARTMENT DEPUTY
DIRECTOR VICTOR TAYLOR ON JUNE 6 TO PRESENT POINTS
IN REFTEL A. AT CONCLUSION OF POLCOUNS' PRESENTATION,
TAYLOR LAUNCHED INTO A TWO-HOUR EXPOSITION OF NIGERIAN
VIEWS ON AFRICAN PROBLEMS.

2. TAKING OFF FROM POLCOUNS' STATEMENT THAT U.S.

BELIEVES ITS ACTION IN SHABA CRISIS IS JUSTIFIED TO MAINTAIN ZAIRE'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND TO PROTECT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF ZAIRIAN ECONOMY, TAYLOR INSISTED ZAIRE'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY IS NOT INVOLVED. NIGERIANS VIEW THE ATTACK ON THE GOVERNMENT AS BEING CARRIED OUT BY ZAIRIAN REBELS (THIS DIRECTLY CONTRADICTS AMERICAS DEPARTMENT DEPUTY DIRECTOR ODEMOSU'S STATEMENT IN REFTEL B THAT SHABA REBELS WERE BASICALLY SECESSIONISTS). HE DID NOT DENY THEY MAY HAVE RECEIVED TRAINING AND SUPPLIES FROM CUBANS "BUT THE CUBANS HAVE TRAINED OTHER GROUPS SUCH AS PF." HE ADAMANTLY INSISTED THAT CUBANS WERE NOT PHYSICALLY INVOLVED IN THE ATTACK. CONSEQUENTLY, NIGERIANS CONSIDER THE SHABA CRISIS AN INTERNAL AFFAIR WHEREIN DISSATISFIED CITIZENS ARE ATTEMPTING TO OVERTHROW A CORRUPT AND INEFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT. TAYLOR CONTRASTED SHABA WITH ETHIOPIA SOMALI CONFLICT WHICH INVOLVED ATTEMPT OF ONE AREA OF ETHIOPIA TO SECEDE WITH THE AID OF ANOTHER COUNTRY, SOMALIA. THIS WAS AN OBVIOUS EXAMPLE OF VIOLATION OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY.

3. IN BOTH CASES, LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENTS CALLED FOR, AND RECEIVED, OUTSIDE HELP. HE ADMITTED THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT IS, IN ITS WAY, AS UNDESIRABLE AS MOBUTU'S BUT FELT IT COULD NOT BE CRITICIZED FOR REQUESTING AID TO DEFEND ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY ALBEIT IT
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WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE DESIRABLE HAD IT SOUGHT AID WITHIN AFRICA. ZAIRIANS, HOWEVER, HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO TRY TO REPLACE A GOVERNMENT THEY DO NOT WANT. HE SAID NIGERIA HAS EVIDENCE THAT THERE IS SO MUCH DISSATISFACTION WITH THE REGIME EVEN SOME OF MOBUTU'S TROOPS JOINED IN WITH THE REBELS.

4. ALTHOUGH TAYLOR DID NOT DISPUTE U.S. SINCERITY IN PROVIDING LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AND AID, HE SUGGESTED UNITED STATES SHOULD MAKE A GREATER EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND THE POINT OF VIEW OF "RESPONSIBLE" AFRICAN NATIONS.

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TAYLOR EXCLUDED AFRICAN "CHARACTERS" SUCH AS CAE'S BOKASSA AND "THE FAKE FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES" FROM THE CLUB. SUCH NATIONS WANT SOUTHERN AFRICA LIBERATED AND DO NOT WANT ANY NON-AFRICAN, INCLUDING CUBAN, INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA. THEY ACCEPT CUBAN PRESENCE AT THIS TIME IN ANGOLA ONLY BECAUSE IT IS A BULWARK AGAINST AFRICA'S ARCHFIEND, SOUTH AFRICA. THEY VIEW FRENCH INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE AS A CONTINUATION OF ITS COLONIAL ASPIRATIONS AND WESTERN PLANS FOR MAINTAINING ZAIRE'S SECURITY AS A COUNTERMOVE TO CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA, THUS INTRODUCING THE LARGER EAST-WEST CONFLICT INTO AFRICA.

5. TAYLOR IMPORTUNED THE U.S. TO RETHINK ITS POLICY IN ZAIRE, WARNING THAT IF WE BECOME MORE EMBROILED, U.S. SINCERITY IN ITS OTHER SOUTHERN AFRICAN INITIATIVES
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WILL BEGIN TO BE QUESTIONED.

6. COMMENT. TAYLOR'S VIEWS ARE A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THE SOUL-SEARCHING AND CONFUSION MEA IS GOING THROUGH. THEY SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS OFFICIAL NIGERIAN POLICY; THERE IS NO DOUBT, HOWEVER, THEY ARE HELD BY MOST OF MEA'S SENIOR OFFICIALS. DURING HIS DISCOURSE, TAYLOR REFERRED SEVERAL TIMES TO A JUNE 5 MEA MEETING ON THIS SUBJECT. IT IS LIKELY THE MEETING WAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORMULATING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND THESE VIEWS

REPRESENT THE CONSENSUS. IT IS ALSO LIKELY THAT THEY MAY NOT BE ACCEPTED BY FMG DECISION MAKERS WHO GENERALLY TAKE A MORE PRAGMATIC APPROACH THAN MEA'S IDEALISTIC BUREAUCRATS.

7. THE NIGERIAS HAVE BEEN PAINFULLY AWARE THAT THEIR UNHAPPINESS WITH THE FRENCH ROLE IN ZAIRE HAS BEEN INCONSISTENT WITH THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE USSR'S ROLE IN ETHIOPIA. THEY CAN NO LONGER USE THE EXCUSE THAT FOREIGN INTERVENTION IS ACCEPTABLE IF INVITED BY THE GOVERNMENT. IN NOW JUDGING FOREIGN INTERVENTION ON THE BASIS OF VIOLATION OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY VIS-A-VIS INTERNAL REBELLION (AND OBVIOUSLY PLACING A VALUE JUDGMENT ON THE QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT INVOLVED IN THE INTERNAL REBELLION), THEY HAVE MANAGED TO RATIONALIZE THEIR BIASES. TAYLOR REPEATEDLY CRITICIZED MOBUTU, EACH TIME POINTING OUT HE WAS SPEAKING AS A PRIVATE PERSON. "OFFICIALLY WE ARE FRIENDS WITH ZAIRE." ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT VOICED, THE BELIEF (OR POSSIBLY WISHFUL THINKING) THAT MOBUTU WOULD BE OVERTHROWN AND REPLACED BY A BETTER GOVERNMENT, IF THE WEST WITHDREW AND REFUSED TO PROP UP THE MOBUTU REGIME, HUNG HEAVY OVER THE CONVERSATION.
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8. PERHAPS THE BEST WAY TO COUNTER TAYLOR'S ARGUMENTS IS TO PRESENT THE NIGERIANS WITH HARD EVIDENCE OF CUBAN PARTICIPATION IN THE SHABA INVASION. WE WOULD APPRECIATE BEING INFORMED WHETHER THERE ARE ANY PLANS TO RELEASE INFORMATION SUCH AS THAT WHICH WAS PRESENTED RECENTLY TO CONGRESS.
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